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NECESSITY, NATURE, and MANNER

OF

SPIRITUAL PURIFICATION

OPENED AND EXPLAINED;

IN FOUR DISCOURSES preached in LENT,

At St. JOHN'S Church, MANCHESTER,

By the Rev. J. CLOWES.

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SEVERAL who heard the following Discourses delivered from the Pulpit, having acknowledged themselves much edified thereby, especially by the *third*; and having expressed a Desire to see them in Print, both for their own Use and that of others, the Author has been induced to comply with their Request, not from any Idea that he has treated the Subject in a *better* or *more perfect* Manner than others have done before him, but in Hopes of exciting the Reader's serious Attention to it's *general* Importance, and *particularly* to the Observations suggested in the third Discourse concerning *the Manner* in which spiritual Purification is effected: This is a Point, it is to be feared, which is involved in much Perplexity in the Minds of many Christians,

Christians, few discerning clearly what God has to do herein, and what they themselves have to do, the Consequence whereof is, that they confound God's Operations with their own, and either leave God to do all, and themselves Nothing, in which Case they perish through Carelessness, or else would do all themselves, and allow Nothing for God to do, in which Case they also perish through Presumption and vain Confidence. It is the Author's earnest Prayer, that what he has said on so interesting a Subject, may be blessed, through the Divine Mercy, to the Reader's Edification, by leading him to distinguish aright between what God doeth, and what Man hath to do, in the Work of spiritual Purification; and at the same Time so to reconcile these different Operations together, that they may be made to harmonize and unite in one and the same blessed End, viz. the Cleansing of the Soul from all Sin, and it's Conjunction thereby with the God of Heaven in Purity, Peace, and Righteousness.

Point. it is interesting in the Minds of many Christians.

ISAIAH I. Part of 16th Verse.

Wash ye, make you clean.

AT this holy Season, which is more especially consecrated to the Commemoration of our blessed Redeemer's Sufferings, and set apart as a Time for a more vigorous Mortification of sinful Appetites, I know of no subject more suitable for our Attention than that of *spiritual Purification* suggested in the Words of my Text. To shew the Necessity, and Manner, and blessed Effect of such Purification, and to supply us with Power to accomplish it, was the great End of our Lord's whole Process, of all his Sorrows, and of all his Labours; of his coming down into this World of Sin, and of his Return to his former Glory. This Process of our Redeemer's can be of no Avail to us, only so far as it leads us to the End thereof;
and

and therefore the Design of the Commemoration of this Process cannot be better answered by us, than whilst we take into attentive serious Consideration that most weighty and important Duty of spiritual Washing or Purification.

As a Means conducive to so good a Purpose, I shall endeavour, in the Course of this holy Season, to set before you the Ground and Measures and Extent of the Duty of spiritual Purification; to exhibit which in a fuller and more distinct View, that so it may make its proper Impression on our Hearts, I propose to consider it under these four general Divisions;

- 1st. The *Necessity* of spiritual Purification;
- 2dly. The *Nature and Effect* thereof;
- 3dly. The *Manner* of its Accomplishment;
- 4thly. The *Reasons* why the Generality of Christians make such small Advances, and experience so little of the Power and Comforts arising from this Duty.

In my present Discourse I shall confine myself to the Consideration of the *Necessity* of spiritual Washing, or Purification; and may all our

Minds,

Minds, through the Divine Grace, be rightly prepared for so weighty a Consideration!

Every one, who has ever examined his own Heart by the Light of God's holy Word, with a sincere Purpose to depart from all Iniquity, and to please God, and to prepare for his heavenly Kingdom, must needs have been convinced within himself of the Necessity of spiritual Washing and Cleansing.

For by such Examination he must needs have discovered in himself, in his Affections, in his Thoughts, and in his Actions, many Defilements contrary to the Purity of God and Heaven; he must needs have found that *the Flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the Flesh, and that these two are contrary the one to the other*;* he must needs have experienced a Law in his Members warring against the Law of his Mind, and bringing him into Captivity to the Law of Sin which is in his Members;† he must needs have felt in himself somewhat of what the Apostle calls *the Body of Death*,‡ and that in consequence thereof, when

he

* Gal. v. 17.

† Rom. vii. 23.

‡ Rom. vii. 24.

he would do Good, Evil is present with him; || he must needs therefore have learnt that all is not right with him; that in his natural State he is alienated from the Life of God; that he is far from the divine Purity and Righteousness; that he falls infinitely short of fulfilling the Will of God; consequently that he has Need of some inward Purification, whereby his Heart and Life may be rendered more conformable and acceptable to his Creator.*

But to be more particular—Let us consider the natural State of Man's Heart only in Relation to the great Law of Charity, or mutual Love, and learn thence the Necessity of spiritual Purification. The Law of Charity, or mutual Love, requires, that we should love each other *as ourselves*; which certainly implies, that we should commiserate another's Sorrows, rejoice in his Joys, and relieve his Distresses, as if they were our own; but who now amongst us by Nature fulfills, or can fulfill, this great and pure Law of Charity? Who that examines himself sincerely, and in the Presence of God, by this Law, doth not find

Reason

Reason to mourn at his great Distance and Departure from it? For who doth not find in himself by Nature a contrary Law of much Self-love ruling and working, whereby he is led to love himself better than others; to think better of himself than others; to wish better to himself than to others; nay, even to despise others in Comparison with himself; to make light of their Sorrows; to envy, rather than rejoice in, their Joys and Prosperities; in short, to be very indifferent how it fares with his Neighbour, provided that all doth but go well with himself? Who, I say, amongst us, that hath seriously examined his own Heart, doth not find Something of such a lawless and uncharitable Spirit of Defilement therein, opposite to the heavenly Spirit of mutual and neighbourly Love? Who therefore cannot hence learn the *absolute Necessity of spiritual Purification*?

And if there be such Opposition in us by Nature to the Law of Charity, or neighbourly Love, what shall we say in Respect to the higher and more pure Love of God? Is there a Man on Earth, whose Heart, by Nature, is framed according to the Purity of this Law?

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Who

Who can say, that he loves God with all his Heart and Mind and Soul and Strength? Who doth not perceive many Defilements of selfish and worldly and fleshly Love contrary to this pure and heavenly Spirit? many Affections, many Desires, many Appetites, that are not rightly subordinate thereto? Who can say that his own Will is entirely submissive to the Will of God; that his own Wisdom is entirely guided by the Wisdom of God; that his daily Actions are in all things governed by the Spirit and Love of God? Who rather does not experience, that the Things of this World and the Flesh, and the Vanities of his own Selfish Heart, have gained much Power over him, and that by Nature he respects, and obeys these more than God? Who therefore cannot here further see the *absolute Necessity of spiritual Purification?*

The holy Scriptures throughout are for ever impressing upon us this great Truth concerning the natural Corruptions and Defilements of the human Heart through Sin, and the consequent Necessity of Cleansing and Purification through the Spirit of Holiness. We there learn the
Origin

Origin of our present natural Filthiness, and Opposition to the Love and Law of God, that it is derived from the Disobedience of our first Parents, and has received Accumulation ever since from the Transgressions of successive Generations. The Language of Scripture on this Head is very full and explicit, "*They are all gone out of the Way, they are altogether become abominable, there is none that doeth Good, no not one:*"* "*God looked upon the Earth, and beheld it was corrupt, for all Flesh had corrupted his Way upon the Earth:*"† "*Ab sinful Nation, a Seed of evil Doers, Children that are Corrupters, they have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked the holy One of Israel to Anger, they are gone away backward;*" "from the Sole of the Foot even unto the Head there is no Soundness in it:"‡ To which may be added the Testimony of St. Paul, "*For all have sinned, and fallen short of the Glory of God,*"§ and of St. John, "*If we say we have no Sin, we deceive ourselves, and the Truth is not in us; if we say that we have not sinned, we make him a Liar, and*

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* Psalm, xiv. 4. † Gen: vi. 12. ‡ Isaiah, i. 4, 5, 6.

§ Rom: iii. 23.

his Word is not in us. || But whilst the holy Records bear Testimony to our natural Corruptions, and Defilements, and great Estrangements from God and his Purity and Peace, they bear Testimony also to Remedies proportionable to our Disorders; they point out infallible Methods of Cleansing and Purification; they console and support us under the Certainty of those Methods if we will but apply to them; this, in short, is the very Sum and Substance of the holy Scriptures or Word of God; they convince the humble and obedient Soul of its Filthiness and Abomination through Sin; they point out the Nature and Manner of spiritual Purification and Restoration through Holiness, or a Return to God; thus the holy Scriptures join their Witness with that of our own Hearts, and will convince every considerate Person, who wants Conviction, of the *absolute Necessity of spiritual Purification and Cleansing.*

But there is still a further Testimony of this Truth, if we yet want a further, to be collected from the State of the visible Creation, and from our outward Bodies. The Wisdom of this World, I am well aware, makes light of

of this Testimony, accounting the outward visible World, and our present outward corrupt and disordered Bodies, to be in that State in which God created them, and that they have suffered no Change through Sin. In like Manner the Wisdom of this World is unwilling to allow of any Corruption in the human Spirit; but, beloved, let us hearken herein to a better Wisdom, which will teach us, that *the whole Creation groaneth and travaileth in Pain together until now*;* and that our very Bodies are defiled and disordered by Reason of Sin. For, whence, let us ask, come the Disorders of Creation causing it *to groan and travail*? or whence come the various Pains and Disorders of our Bodies? God, it is plain, did not cause them, for we read, "*he saw all things which he had made, and behold they were very good*:"† They must needs therefore have originated in Sin, and every serious Mind will certainly refer them to this their true and only Source.

In short, Beloved, let us look into our own Hearts, let us look into the Oracles of God, let us look into the whole Frame and Constitution

* Rom viii. 22.

† Gen. i. 31.

tion of the visible World; let us examine the *Height and the Depth*, Things within us, and Things without us, we shall every where see impressed and engraven, in most legible Characters, this great Truth, that Man hath miserably estranged himself from the Purity of God; that he is not at present what his good Creator intended him to be; that both in his inward and outward Man, both in his Soul and Body, he hath contracted dreadful Disorder, Pollution and Filthiness; and consequently, *stands in Need of spiritual Cleansing and Purification*, before he can be meet to enter into the Regions of Peace and Purity.

To conclude—Let us labour, Beloved, to impress these great and weighty Truths on our Hearts, with all that Power of Conviction which their Importance demands. Let us no longer study, by any artificial Refinements of human Wisdom, or by a false Reasoning blinded by vain Self-love, to hide from ourselves our natural Defilements; for this is to reject the Wisdom of God, and the Convictions of enlightened Reason, and the Demonstrations of sober Experience, to be deluded

deluded by a specious Folly, which would lead us to Destruction. Let us rather strive to discover our Impurities, to bring them all to the Light, to make them manifest both to God and ourselves. It is surely better we should know our Disorders, than that they should escape our Notice, because in the former Case we may remove them, whereas in the latter Case they must remain unremoved, and consequently increasing in Malignancy. Let us then be bold to open our Eyes to the Truth, and to desire God to open them; let us beseech him, through the Light of his holy Spirit, to shew us all our secret Sins, all our departures from his Purity; let us regard ourselves here as in a fallen State of Things, in which it is become necessary to *take up a daily Cross,** and to *work out our Salvation with Fear and Trembling;†* let us learn to read both in our own Hearts, and in God's Word, and in the outward World, and in our outward Bodies, the Marks and Characters of Transgression and Estrangement from Heaven and its Purity; and then both our own Hearts, and God's Word, and the

* Matt. xvi. 24. Mark viii. 34. Luke ix. 23.

† Philip ii. 12.

the outward World, and our very bodily Infirmities, will all hold forth to us most excellent Lessons of edifying Wisdom and Instruction: For then all will tell us this awful Truth, that we are very corrupt, and stand in Need of Purification before we can be clean in God's Sight, and have a Place in his Kingdom; but they will all add too this comfortable Truth for our Strength and Consolation, that the Means of our Purification are as near to us as our Defilements; and that if we apply diligently unto those Means, looking sincerely unto God, then our very Disorders and Defilements will tend to help forward our Purification, and that because it is written, *All things work together for Good to them that love God;** and in another Place, "*Godly Sorrow worketh Repentance unto Salvation not to be repented of;*† thus the Conviction of Sin will shew us the Need of Purification; the Need of Purification will lead us to Conversion; Conversion will bring us to *Jesus Christ* in Repentance and Obedience; and through Repentance and Obedience to *Jesus Christ* and his Gospel we

* Rom. viii. 28.

† 11. Cor: vii. 10.

we shall assuredly sooner or later experience
Purification from every Defilement, and Deli-
verance from all our Sins, Sorrows, and Dis-
orders.

HAVING shown, in the preceding Discourse,
the Necessity of spiritual Warfare, and
Purification, I shall now proceed to consider
as I proposed, the Means and blessed Way of
that holy Duty.

Many Christians, it is to be feared, fall into
the greatest and most dangerous Mistakes on
this Subject, for want of considering aright
the true Nature of spiritual Purity, and that
remain all their Lives Strangers to its right
Efficacy: thus many suppose Purification to
consist merely in a Change of the outward Man,
or in the Regulation of their external Actions,

and give their attention to the
C SERMON
Poor; they will frequent the public Worship,
God; they will profess of Divine Ordinances;
they will acknowledge good and holy Books;
they will repeat many Prayers; and even think
and talk about God and holy Things; and they
fancy

S E R M O N II.

HAVING shewn, in the preceding Discourse, the *Necessity* of spiritual Washing, or Purification, I shall now proceed to consider, as I propos'd, the *Nature*, and blessed *Effect* of that holy Duty.

Many Christians, it is to be feared, fall into the greatest and most dangerous Mistakes on this Subject; for Want of considering aright the *true Nature* of spiritual Purification, they remain all their Lives Strangers to its blessed Efficacy; thus many suppose Purification to consist merely in a Change of the outward Man, or in the Regulation of their external Actions only; they will give Alms occasionally to the Poor; they will frequent the public Worship of God; they will partake of Divine Ordinances; they will at Times read good and holy Books; they will repeat many Prayers, and even think and talk about God and holy Things; and they
fancy

fancy that in so doing they are pure in the Sight of God, and are cleansed from Sin; when possibly their inward Man has nevertheless undergone no Change; their Tempers, and Inclinations, and inward Habits are like those of the rest of the World; their Happinesses and Pleasures, their Griefs and Sorrows, have no higher a Source than those of the most impure amongst Men; they remain Lovers of themselves, Lovers of the World, to Lovers of Vanity and fleshly Delights; as if they had never heard the Name of God; in short, notwithstanding the Decency of their outward Conduct, the true Love of God, and of their Neighbour, and the inward Purity and Peace of Mind thence derived, are unknown to them; and although they *name the Name of Christ* with their Lips, yet for Want of *departing from Iniquity*, they are void of the purifying Power and Love of Christ in their Hearts.

Too many, I say, it is to be feared, amongst those who call themselves Christians, fall into this mistaken and dangerous Idea of spiritual Purification, whereby they greatly deceive themselves,

themselves, and hinder the Progress of their Salvation.

But, Beloved, need I be at any Pains to expose before you the Falseness and fatal Delusion of such an Idea? or rather, do not you perceive it manifest in your own Minds? Do not you find something *from within* dictating to you, that such outward Form of Purification can of itself be of no Avail in the Sight of God? Is there not a *Teacher in your Hearts* which saith, and which would convince you, if you would hearken to it, that true Purification, acceptable to God, and profitable to Man, must be that of the *inward Man*, according to these Words of the Lord, "*Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the Cup and Platter, that the Outside may be clean also;*"* and according to the Prayer of the Psalmist, "*Make me a clean Heart, O God, and renew a right Spirit within Me.*"†

Yes, Beloved, if we would all of us put away our Iniquities, and hearken diligently to the true Teaching of the Holy Ghost, the Spirit

* Matt. xxii. 25.

† Psalm li. 10.

Spirit of Truth, in our Minds, we should then no longer mistake the true Nature of spiritual Purification, for then we should all be *taught of God* wherein it consisted, and wherein it did not consist; we should see by his Light that our Washing and Cleansing must first begin with the *inward* Man, with the Heart, with the Will, with the Desires and Affections, to render these pure in the Sight of God; and thence it must descend to the *outward* Man, regulating the Understanding and the external Actions, according to the Purity of the Law of God in the inward Man.

Let me bespeak your serious Attention, Beloved, whilst I further unfold to you the *Nature* of spiritual Purification, according to this true and scriptural Notion thereof, as it must be manifested to every considerate Mind.

It is the concurrent Testimony of Experience, and of the holy Scriptures throughout, that the Impurities of Man have their Place in the *Heart*, or in what may be called the Will-Principle, whence all his Desires and Affections are derived. This was very fully proved in the preceding Discourse, wherein it was shewn,
how

how exceeding corrupt Man's Heart or Will-Principle is by Nature; how in Consequence thereof he loves himself and this World better than God and his Neighbour; how he serves the Flesh more than the Spirit; how he delights in Vanity and Sin more than in Truth and Righteousness; how in short, his whole Life in his natural State is governed by wrong Ends and Designs, in Consequence whereof he sets temporal Things above Things eternal, this World above another, the Body above the Soul, Shadows above Substances, Death above Life, and to sum up all in a Word, Himself above God, thus inverting the Order, disturbing the Peace, and destroying the Harmony of the Creation of God.

Behold here a just Picture of Man's Impurity and Corruptions by Nature! It consists in this impure, false, and sinful State of his Heart, or Will-Principle, and of all his Desires and Affections, and Thoughts therein originating. What enlightened Eye then cannot here see plainly into the true Nature of spiritual Purity, and in what it must needs consist? For if Impurity consists in loving ourselves

ourselves and the World better than God and
 our Neighbour, Purity must surely needs con-
 sist in loving God and our Neighbour better
 than ourselves and the World. If Impurity
 again consists in obeying the Flesh more than
 the Spirit, Purity then must surely needs consist
 in obeying the Spirit more than the Flesh.
 Again if through Impurity we delight in Sin and
 Vanity, more than in Truth and Righteousness,
 through Purification we shall be enabled to de-
 light in Truth and Righteousness more than in
 Sin and Vanity; our Love-Affections will thus be
 cleansed and renewed; the governing Ends and
 Designs of Life will be changed; the great
 and merciful God will be the chief and central
 Object of our Regard; the Things of his
 eternal Kingdom will engage our chief Con-
 cern; we shall see the Things of this World
 and the Flesh as Nothing and mere Emptiness,
 compared with those more substantial Objects;
 to gain the Favour and Mercy of Jesus Christ;
 to secure a Place in his Love; to prepare our-
 selves for his Appearing; to grow in his Grace
 and recover his holy Image; to be renewed
 in our inner Man by the pure Spirit of his Law
 and

and Commandments; these will be the great Ends and ruling Designs of our Lives; and whereas in the Impurity of our natural State we reverse all Order, oppose all Truth, destroy all Peace and Harmony, by setting temporal Things above eternal, this World above another, the Body above the Soul, as we advanced in Purification, both Order, Truth, Peace and Harmony would be restored; every Principle in our Constitutions would have it's proper Place and due Subordination; the Love of God and Heaven would be above all, or in the inmost of the Sanctuary; the Love of our Neighbour would be in the next or secondary Place; whilst the Love of ourselves, of this World, and the Flesh, would be put down into the last and lowest Place in this Divine Sub-ordination.

Thus, Beloved, would real Gospel Purification, if we would come to the true Experience thereof, affect our *Heart* or Will-Principle; but it would not rest here; it would affect also our *Understandings*, our *Thoughts*, and our outward *Actions*.

The

The Understanding and Thoughts of the natural Man, whatsoever he may think to the contrary, partake of the Impurities of his Heart, or Will-Principle; and so also do his outward Actions, howsoever they may appear outwardly pure and holy before Men; the Reason is, because whatever Man is *within*, such must he needs be *without*, inasmuch as outward Things ever proceed from, and are similar to their inward Essences.

Behold here the further Progress of spiritual Purification, and the blessed Effects of that Progress! It is the sure and happy Consequence of a Purification of the Love, or Will-Principle, that the Understanding, the Thoughts, and outward Actions partake thereof; whensoever the pure Love of God is opened with Power in the Will, or Heart, it presently descends into the lower Powers and Principles of the Constitution; it first enlightens the Understanding, which was before closed up and darkened through the false Wisdom of selfish, worldly, and carnal Love; it purifies the intellectual Sight, fitting it thereby for the Contemplation of divine

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Objects;

Objects; the purified Christian therefore sees with *new Eyes*, and beholds an Infinity of new and blessed Objects of spiritual Vision which he could not see before; he discerns between Good and Evil; he distinguishes well the Natures and Properties of each; he separates between the *clean and the unclean*, the *precious and the vile*; he knows what is of God and what is not of God in himself; he hath therefore all Wisdom, but then it is a Wisdom, which he knows is not his own, but of God; and therefore it doth not puff him up with vain Pride, like the Wisdom of this World, for he finds that it is only to be attained and retained in deep Humiliation; in short, he wills, he thinks, he does Nothing, without considering and marking well, from what Source or Kingdom whether of Good or Evil, his Will, his Thoughts and Actions proceed; thus he walks continually in the Light of Heaven, or, as it is otherwise called, *the Light of Life*, according those Words of our blessed Lord, "*He that followeth me shall not* walk

*walk in Darkness, but shall have the Light of Life.**

And as the Influences of true Gospel Purification extend thus from the *Heart* to the *Understanding*, so they descend still further, and reach also to the *outward Actions*; the purified Christian learns from the Love of God this weighty Lesson, *to let his Light so shine before men, that they may see his good Works, &c.†* he is therefore continually employed in some good and useful Work, whereby he may glorify God, and do Good in his Station and Calling to his Fellow-Creatures; he is taught the dreadful Consequences of an indolent unprofitable Life, that in such a Case the Love of God stagnates, and is unfruitful; whereas being brought into Operation, there is a continual Encrease and Multiplication of the heavenly Treasure; his Works however are not hypocritical, not formal, not dead, not meritorious Works; but they are the genuine Fruits of an heaven-born Charity; they proceed from a living Principle within, which is the Love and Truth of God; they bring

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* John, viii. 2.

† Matt. v. 16.

therefore their own Reward with them, and he wishes, he desires Nothing more than to advance daily in spiritual Purification, that he may taste daily the purer Pleasures of doing Good.

Thus have I endeavoured, in some small Degree to point out to you the Nature and blessed Effect of spiritual Purification; I say, in some small Degree, because whensoever you come to experience it in your own Hearts and Lives, ye will know that I have said very little in Comparison of what you will find manifested in yourselves concerning it. May *the little* however which has been said be a Means of leading us all to look for more. May the Spirit of God ingraft this *little* deeply in our Hearts, and then it may become *much*! for then it would lead us all to make the blessed Experiment of spiritual Purification in ourselves; we should no longer take it upon the Testimony of others, but we should be convinced by the blessed and more powerful Testimony of the Love of God in our own Bosoms. Oh then, let us hasten to look for this Testimony! let us seek after the great and glorious

rious God, the Creator, the Redeemer, the Regenerator, and Saviour, whose NAME is JESUS CHRIST; let us feel after the Realities of his Presence, and Grace, and Kingdom in us; let us labour for Purification thereby from all our Abominations and natural Filthiness; let us no longer walk after the Wisdom of this World and the Darkness of the Flesh; let us open our Hearts and Eyes to the eternal Love and the eternal Light; then shall we know what Purification means, and in what it consists; and for we shall then distinguish between the clean and the unclean, the Good and the Evil, the temporal and the eternal, the dead and the living; and choosing the Love and Wisdom of Jesus Christ, and renouncing the Love and Wisdom of ourselves, we shall bear Witness in our own Bosoms to the Blessedness which our Lord spake of when he said, *Blessed are the pure in Heart, for they shall see God.* †

† Matt. v. 8.

S E R M O N

ious God, the Creator, the Redeemer, the
 Regenerator, and Saviour, whose Name is
 Jesus Christ; let us feel after the Realities
 of his Presence, and Grace, and Kingdom in
 us, let us labour to bring forth from
 all our Abominations and natural Inclinations;
 let us no longer walk after the Wisdom of this

IN the preceding Discourses we have consi-
 dered the *Necessity* and the *Nature* of spiritual
 Washing or Purification, we shall now proceed
 as was before purposed, to point out the Means
 and Methods proper for the Accomplishment
 of this blessed Work.

But first, Beloved, suffer me to bespeak
 your most serious Attention to this important
 Part of the subject under Consideration; suffer
 me to call you to a particular Application to
 God for a Divine Light to enlighten your
 Minds herein; suffer me to press upon you the
 Removal of all those Prejudices and false Ap-
 pearances, which carnal Wisdom may suggest,
 that so your Understandings may be rightly
 prepared to receive the Light of Truth.

There is the more Need of such a Prepara-
 tion, inasmuch as many, it is to be feared, fall
 into

into the most fatal Mistakes, at this Day, in Regard to the Means and Methods of spiritual Purification. Some, for instance, suppose it to be the Work of *God alone*, without Man's having any Part or Concern in it; others on the contrary suppose it to be a Work of *Man alone*, without God's having any Part or Concern in it; both these Notions are alike false and dangerous; the former leads to Presumption, to Carelessness, to spiritual Sloth, and Security; the latter leads to vain Confidence, to Boasting, to Separation from God rather than Conjunction with him, whilst the Soul thinks to be saved merely by it's own Power and Exertions. Several other Mistakes, of a similar Kind, might, if expedient, be here pointed out and exposed; as where it is imagined that Man may be purified by some instantaneous Operation of the Divine Grace; or by some Act of arbitrary and irresistible Mercy on the Part of God; or by a Life of Faith and Piety *alone*, without a moral Life, that is the Life of Charity; or by a Life of Charity, *alone*, without a Life of Faith and Piety at the same Time; but all these, and other Errors of the same Kind, will

will be easily detected, whilst we consider and apprehend aright these two important Particulars, 1st. What *God has to do*, or what Part he acts, in Regard to Man's Purification; and 2dly. What *Man has to do*, or what Part is given him to act in this great Work.

And may the God of all Grace and Mercy give us all Eyes to see clearly, and understand effectually, and consider seriously, this awful Subject, in which the Salvation of all our Souls is so nearly concerned: for none can be saved without spiritual Purification.

1st. then, let us see what God has to do, and what part he acts, in Regard to our Purification, or spiritual Washing.

In God, we shall find, has very much to do in this great Matter; for, first of all, he supplies us with the *Means* of spiritual Washing, or Purification; these Means are very various; the first and chief to be mentioned is, *his holy Word*, which proceeds from him, of which he is the essential Life and Spirit, and which he has given us as a Stream, or River, or Fountain of *living Water* for our spiritual Cleansing; for the holy Word of God, let it be well observed,

observed, is such *living Water*, and it is in Reference thereto that Jehovah calls himself in the Prophet *a Fountain of living Waters*;* for the same Reason the Lord saith of every faithful one that believes on him, “*Out of his Belly shall flow Rivers of living Water*;† and in another Place, *Whosoever drinketh of this Water, shall thirst again, but whoso drinketh of the Water which I shall give him shall never thirst, but the Water which I shall give him shall be in him a Well of Water springing up into eternal Life*.‡ It is for the same Reason that Mention is made of a *River of Water* in the New JERUSALEM, “*He shewed me a pure River of Water of Life proceeding out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb*,”§ and therefore the Lord saith to his true Disciples, “*Now ye are clean through the Word which I have spoken unto you*.”§

Behold here then the first and chief Means of spiritual Purification! It is *the Word of God*: None can be clean but who wash in this purifying and *living Water*; for the Word of God teaches us what Sin is, and how it is to be

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* Jer. ii. 13.

† John, vii. 38.

‡ 1 John iv. 13, 14. || Rev. xxii. 1. § John xv. 3.

removed; it teaches us also what and who God is, and how we may approach unto him, and have Conjunction with him; it informs us of a Heaven and a Hell, and eternal Life after Death; it acquaints us how we may live hereafter eternally happy with God; in the holy Word therefore is opened to the believing Soul all heavenly Truth needful for Salvation; this is *the Water of Life*, and whosoever effectually washes in it, becomes clean from Sin; but whosoever neglects to wash in it, Sin and Defilement must needs abide in him.

God however has not only provided his Word as a Means of our Purification; he has done, and continues to do still more for every one of us; for he supplies us all with Grace and Power to use this his Word for Purification, or in other Words, to wash ourselves in this *living Water*; let us here stop awhile to consider and adore this great Mercy of our God. It is the uniform Language of the holy Scriptures throughout, that God had ever an internal Communication with the Hearts of Men; it is by Virtue of this Communication that he is enabled to bless Man, by preserving him

him

him from the Dominion of Evil, and governing and guiding him by his holy Spirit of Peace and Righteousness: When this blessed Communication was nearly lost through Man's Sin, the merciful JEHOVAH, we learn, was pleased to open it anew, by assuming Himself the Nature of Man, appearing here amongst Men on Earth, opening afresh his Word of Truth and Righteousness, combating and overcoming the Powers of Sin and Darkness, removing them thus from Men, and keeping them removed through the Glorification of the human Nature, which he finally made One with the Divine Nature in the sacred Person of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; thus Communication was again restored between the Creator and his Creatures through this visible Manifestation and Interference of the invisible Jehovah, and all who would believe on him, and receive him, under this Manifestation, had *Power again given to become the Sons of God.**

Behold here then a further Means of Purification communicated unto Man by God!

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Through

* John i. 12.

Through the Manifestation of Jehovah in the Person of Jesus Christ, and in Consequence of the Redemption wrought thereby, Power is given unto every Man to work out his Salvation, by purifying himself from Sin. Let us attend to and observe well this heavenly Gift that is in us; for who amongst us, that examines himself, will not find that he has this *free Grace* and Power from Jesus Christ? Who cannot, if he be so disposed, believe and look into the Word of God? Who cannot learn thence the Things appertaining to Salvation? Who cannot examine his Heart and Life thereby? Who cannot put away Evil from his Heart and Life, as the holy Word enjoins? Who cannot thus look unto the God of this holy Word, that is, *the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*? Who cannot believe on and love this redeeming God, and attain Conjunction with him by keeping his holy Commandments of Love and Charity? Who, I say, has not Power from the Lord of Heaven to do all this? Who cannot therefore believe and acknowledge, if he be so disposed, that this Power is from the
 Lord,

Lord, and is his continual Gift to Man for Salvation?

Behold here then another Means of spiritual Purification supplied continually by God! He gives Man the Power and Freedom of washing himself in *the Water of Life*, that is, his holy Word; he gives him the Power and Freedom of thus turning from Sin, leading a new Life, attaining Regeneration, and becoming a pure Child of Heaven and Righteousness; he gives him, and for ever supplies him with the Power and Freedom of rising out of every Defilement, Disorder, and Misery of his present fallen State, and of regaining Paradise, the Bosom of God, the Kingdom of the eternal Liberty, Rest, Purity, and Peace.

I might here add divers other innumerable Means, which the Mercy of God daily supplies for Man's Purification; such are his various external Providences over us, both in the Way of Mercy and of Judgment, of Consolation and Correction, of public and of private Visitation; such are all the inward and outward Troubles which all of us at Times experience, though alas! we are apt to think little of their
true

true Ground and merciful Intention; such are all those inward Convictions of Sin, and of the Vanity of this World, and of the Greatness of the Things of God and Eternity, which the Spirit of God at Times excites in the most thoughtless and abandoned Souls. Such in short is the whole Order and Scheme of the Divine Administration in this lower World, where every Thing both in general and in particular bespeaks the Corruption of Man through Sin, and is a loud Call upon him, and a powerful Means, if he would listen to and obey it, to cleanse himself from *all Filthiness of Flesh and Spirit*,

But it is Time we should now hasten to see what *Man* has to do, or what Part *he* has to act, in this great Work of his spiritual Washing, or Purification.

We have seen what God hath done, and what he still continually does herein for Man; it is possible however, and too many unhappy Instances confirm that possibility, that what God has done, and continues to do, may all be in vain. Man, we see by daily Experience, may reject God, and his Word, and stifle and extinguish

tinguish the Grace and Power of God in his own Heart; he may continue in Sin and Vanity and Thoughtlessness, forgetting God and Heaven, fighting against the Convictions of God's holy Spirit in his own Mind, notwithstanding what God has done and does, to bring those Convictions to good Effect, by leading him to cleanse himself from Sin.

Who then cannot hence see the Necessity of Man's doing Something for himself, of his taking a Part also with God, or, as the Apostle expresseth it, *of profiting by the Manifestation of the Spirit,** in the Work of spiritual Purification?

But what is that *Something* which Man has to do, or what Part is he to take herein?—Oh, that we were all enlightened with Wisdom from above to give a right Answer to this Question! Oh that we did all, out of a real Concern for Salvation, discern the Light of Truth herein! Oh that for this Purpose the Spirit of Truth might now descend, and open in all our Understandings the full Force of these Words of the Prophet, which bring the most satisfactory

* 1 Cor. xii. 7.

tory and convincing Information on this Subject, *"Wash ye, make ye clean; put away the Evil of your Doings from before mine Eyes; cease to do Evil; learn to do well; seek Judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the Widows; then, (observe this well) though your Sins be as Scarlet, they shall be as white as Snow; though they be red like Crimson, they shall be as Wool."*†

Behold here, Beloved, plainly declared unto us, what Man has to do, what Part he has to take, in Regard to his spiritual Purification! God has provided the Means, but it is Man's Part to use and apply them, looking unto God. God gives Man Water to wash himself, he also gives him the Power and Freedom to wash himself, but it is for Man to go to that Water, and use the Power and Freedom of washing therein which God has given him. We may see a clear and familiar Illustration of this in the Case of natural or bodily washing. No man can wash his Hands or his Face without Water; nor is it enough for him to have Water, unless he hath also the Power
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† Isaiah i. 16, 17, 18.

and Freedom to use it; nor yet is it enough to have both Water, Power and Freedom, unless he will further put his Hands in the Water and wash himself, according to the Power and Freedom he possesses; but if he have Plenty of Water, together with Power and Freedom, and be disposed to wash himself, he may then wash effectually.

Exactly similar to this is the Case of spiritual Washing; the Water here is the *living Water* of heavenly Truth, or the Word of God; Man's Freedom and Power to wash therein is the continual Gift of God to him in his Free-will; he is left at Liberty however to use this Gift, or not to use it; God does not compel any one, for if he compelled, we should no longer be Men, but mere Machines, or Stocks, or Stones; he therefore gives Man Water to wash in, he gives him Power to wash, and to *compel himself* to wash, (for Man may, consistently with Freedom, *compel himself*, though he cannot be compelled by another); he also calls upon him, and encourages him to wash, and points out to him the dreadful Consequences of not washing; but still he does not force Man to

the Water, nor force the Exertion of his free Power; this is for Man to do as of himself, but at the same Time in Dependance on the Lord, and confessing all his Power to be of the Lord; and Man does this, when he believes in the Word of God, when he learns it, when he digests it well, when he looks to God in it and through it; but especially when he discovers and puts away from him the Evil of his Doings; when he *ceases to do Evil, and learns to do well*; when he labours to renounce the Sin and Vanity and Defilement of Self-love, the Love of the World and the Flesh; when he calls these Things infernal, and makes them abominable in himself; finally, when departing from all Iniquity, it is the great Concern of his Heart, and Labour of his Life to become perfect in the Love of God and his Neighbour, and to bring forth the blessed Fruits thereof in all the good Works of a holy and religious Life.

When Man acts thus, then he acts in Conformity to God and his Law; then he uses and improves aright the Talents which God has given him; then he reconciles the *apparent* Contradiction

diction of Freedom on the part of the Creature,
 and omnipotent Operation on the part of the
 Creator; then, in the Language of the Apostle,
he works out his own Salvation, and yet is
 enabled to confess, that *it is God who worketh in*
him both to will and to do of his good pleasure ;*
 he compels himself, and yet feels himself free ;
 he purifies himself, and yet confesses in all Hu-
 miliation that he is purified of God ; he wills,
 he thinks, he practises what is good, in perfect
 Liberty, as of himself, and yet in so doing he
 takes no Glory or Merit to himself, because he
 acknowledges that all his power to do so is from
 Heaven ; then in short he both glorifies God,
 and works out his own Purification and Salva-
 tion ; he glorifies God, not by his Indolence,
 not by his Inexertion, not by hanging down his
 Hands and doing Nothing, as some vainly ima-
 gine they may glorify God ; but by a faithful
 and diligent Use of the Grace and Power which
 God continually gives him, ascribing all the
 Merit and Glory thereof unto God ; and he
 works out his own Purification and Salvation,
 by cleansing himself from the Defilements of

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Evil,

* Philip: 11. 12. 13.

Evil, by loving the Lord Jesus Christ above all Things, and his Neighbour as himself, and by living a Life according to such Love, in all Freedom, and with all Delight, knowing that the Lord giveth him such Freedom and such Delight as his eternal Recompence, Rest, and heavenly Blessedness.

See here then Beloved, plainly pointed out the Means and Methods of spiritual Washing or Purification! It is not of God *alone*, nor of Man *alone*, to put away the Sins and Defilements of Man; it is not by a Life of Piety *alone*, nor of *Faith alone*, nor of moral Virtue *alone*, nor of the deepest Speculations even in Divine Things, nor of the highest intellectual Attainments *alone*, that the Spirit of Man is made clean from it's natural Impurities, and rendered acceptable to God; but this blessed End of spiritual Cleansing is accomplished, just in Proportion as Man learns the Word and Will of God, and examines himself thereby, and renounces in himself whatever is opposite to the Love of God and his Neighbour, and lives a new Life of Charity and Faith according to God's Commandments. When Man liveth thus,

thus, looking unto the Lord and Saviour *Jesus Christ*, and acknowledging his holy Grace and Power herein, then he is in a State of daily Purification from Sin; then he enters into a nearer and closer Conjunction with God and Heaven; he is formed daily more and more perfectly, both in the inner and outer Man, according to all the Laws of heavenly Order; he breathes daily a purer Spirit of heaven-born Charity, Mercy, Meekness, Patience, and every other Christian Virtue, whereby he is delivered daily from his own natural and contrary Spirit of Uncharitableness, Unmercifulness, Pride, Impatience, and every other Anti-christian Vice; thus renouncing every Thing that is evil, and willing, thinking and doing every Thing that is just and good, in Freedom as of himself, and yet in Humiliation and Submission as under Divine Influence, he experienceth a daily Removal of Sin and Defilement, and a daily Growth and Establishment in the pure Virtues and Graces of Heaven, through the omnipotent Working of the Lord of Heaven, who puts away all Evil in Man, just so far as Man concurs with him, by diligently searching out
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and humbly confessing what is evil in himself, with a Desire to have it put away.

To conclude—It now only remains that we apply faithfully and sincerely to the above Means and Methods of spiritual Purification, and then we cannot fail of advancing daily in the great and blessed Work, and thereby finally of attaining Peace to our Souls. For this Purpose suffer me now, with all possible Earnestness, as in the Presence of God, before whom both You and I must shortly give Account of the Use of our Talents, to press upon you the diligent Application of these Means and Methods. Believe first in the Word of God ; believe it to contain *living Water* from the great Fountain Jesus Christ, the manifested Jehovah ; look therefore to this *redeeming God* in it ; imagine that you see Him ever sitting at this *Well of Life*, and offering to you daily this living Water for spiritual Washing : Believe next that you have free Power to wash yourselves in this Water, or not to wash ; believe that this Power also is from Jesus Christ, and is his continual Gift to you for Salvation ; that he leaves you *free* nevertheless to use it, or not to use it ; believe however that
he

he greatly desires you to use it, because out of his infinite Love to you, he greatly longs and labours for your Purification and Salvation: Lastly believe, that it is your Part to go to the Water, and use the Power of Washing which the Lord giveth you; do not therefore idly stand still, and hang down your Hands, and say, I cannot wash myself, do thou Lord wash Me; for then the Lord will assuredly say to you Words to this Effect; " Why canst not thou wash thyself thou idle Servant? Have not I given thee Water to wash in, and Power also to go to the Water and wash? and wilt thou say thou canst not go? Canst not thou read and learn my Word? Canst not thou examine thine Heart and Life thereby? Canst thou not discover Evil in thine Heart and Life, and when thou hast discovered it, canst thou not confess it, and abominate it, and forsake it, imploring my Grace and Mercy to preserve thee from it? Canst thou not cease to do Evil and learn to do well, according to my Commandments? Canst thou not think humbly of thyself, and exalt me in my pure Spirit of Love and Charity, and thus love thy Fellow Creatures, and delight in doing them Service?

Service? Canst thou not lastly believe, that in so doing thou wilt enjoy eternal blessed Conjunction with Me, and I with thee, and thus wilt live in a State of daily Purification from Sin, and finally attain eternal Peace, and come to dwell with me in my Kingdom? How sayest thou then, thou canst not wash? whereas thou oughtest rather to have said, Lord, I will humbly do as thou commandest Me, and I will believe that if I use my best Endeavours to put away Evil from my Heart and Life, thou wilt then be with Me, and help Me, and bless Me in so doing, and make my *one Talent ten Talents*."

Oh terrible Words of most awful, but just Reproof, to all such idle and unprofitable Servants, as expect to be made clean by the Mercy of the Lord, without ever examining their own Hearts and Lives concerning Evil, and using their own best Endeavours, in Dependence on the Lord, to put it away, and to lead a new Life of Faith and Charity according to the Commandments!

May we all, Beloved, escape this terrible Reproof! For this Purpose, may we use freely,
faithfully

faithfully and humbly the Power which our merciful God daily gives us for spiritual Purification! May we work together with our God in the great Work of cleansing our Hearts and Lives from all our natural Defilements, and becoming pure through the holy Influences of heaven-born Truth and Charity! Thus shall we never hear from our God the Words of severe Rebuke, but shall finally be found in the Number of those blessed Ones of whom it is written, "*These are they which came out of great Tribulation, and have washed their Robes, and made them white in the Blood of the Lamb; therefore they are before the Throne of God, and serve him Day and Night in his Temple; and he that sitteth on the Throne shall dwell among them.*"* AMEN.

* Rev. vii. 14. 15.

G SERMON

S E R M O N IV.

HAVING endeavoured, in the preceeding Discourses, to point out the *Necessity, Nature, and Manner* of spiritual Washing, or Purification, I shall now proceed to the 4th Thing which I purposed to consider, viz. *the Reasons why the Generality of Christians make such small Advances in, and experience so little of the Power and Comforts arising from this Work.*

Let me first request of you, Beloved, not to think the Suggestion harsh and unjust, that the Generality of Christians are faulty in a Matter of such Importance. Daily Experience, alas! does but too much justify the Observation. The Decay of solid Piety, the Overflowings of Ungodliness, the general Inattention to Things of a serious Concern, give every thinking Mind too many Occasions of melancholy Apprehension in
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this Matter. Nay, who amongst us can say, that he does not add Something to the general Guilt and Blameableness? Who can say he hath made his Heart and Life so clean and pure in the Sight of God, as he might have done? Who can say that he hath made the most of that *Talent* which the Lord hath entrusted to him, and that it was not possible to have improved it further? Let us not therefore endeavour to make ourselves blameless herein, but let us rather in Humiliation and Contrition all of us acknowledge our Unprofitableness: Let us in this Spirit seriously consider and examine the Reasons why we have not profited more than we have done: We may then hope for the divine Grace to lead us to Amendment in future; and our merciful Lord will assuredly be with us, and bless us, whilst he sees us thus earnest and anxious in discovering the causes of past Negligence, and in making better Improvement of future Opportunities.

Hoping and praying earnestly for an Encrease of such a Spirit amongst us, I shall now proceed to the Consideration proposed.

Now the Reasons why the Generality of Christians make such small Advances in, and
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experience so little of the Power and Comforts arising from spiritual Purification, tho' they be many in *Name*, yet in *Effect* they are but *One*, and they may all therefore be concluded in *One*; viz. this, *a Negligence in the stirring up and rightly exercising the Grace and Power of God implanted in our Freewill.*

I shall endeavour to unfold this Reason to you more particularly, by considering it in Regard to two sorts of Persons; 1st. in Regard to the *unconverted and impenitent*; 2d. in Regard to the *penitent and converted.*

And 1st. It is but too plain, that amongst those who call themselves Christians, there are many who live in an *impenitent unconverted* State of Heart and Life; by which I would be understood to mean, whose Hearts and Lives have never undergone any Change; whose Love and Affections are merely natural, that is, selfish, worldly, and carnal; who do not know, and are not willing to know, what spiritual and heavenly Love is, which is Love towards God and our Neighbour; who have often heard of the Name of *Jesus Christ*, and say they believe in him, but who in the mean Time are altogether unacquainted with the power and
Grace

Grace and Life of Jesus Christ in their own Souls; who live therefore in the utmost Contrariety and Opposition to the Gospel, being the Servants of Sin, the Friends of the World, Lovers of themselves, having never separated between the good and the evil, the clean and the unclean, in their own Hearts, and Affections, tho' possibly their outward Life before Man may appear pure and holy.

It is too plain, I say, that there are many such Characters amongst those who call themselves Christians. But what now shall we say is the Reason why so many remain in such an unpurified State? Why has not the Grace and the Gospel of Christ more Effect upon them? How comes it to pass that their Hearts are so senseless, that the Things of this World make so much Impression, that the Things of another World make so little? They surely might have become great Saints; they might have been the holy and happy Children of God; they might have advanced in the blessed Paths of Purification and Regeneration as well as others; they might have laid up hereby endless Treasures in the Kingdom of Heaven with the blessed Prophets, Apostles, Martyrs

Martyrs and Saints of old—Whence thence is it (the Question demands our most serious Attention) whence, I say, is it, that there are any, who are thus the enemies of their own everlasting Peace and Blessedness?

Awful and interesting as this Question is, there can no one satisfactory Answer be given to it, but what was just now suggested as the great Cause of Mens abiding in spiritual Impurity, *viz. a Negligence in the Stirring up and rightly exercising the Grace and Power of God implanted in their Freewill.*

Let us consider and understand this well. It is the Voice of Scripture, and it is the Voice of Reason; it is the Voice of every thing both within us and without us, that every Man has power from God, if he will seek it, and use it, to work out his purification, and thereby his Salvation. This power resides in every Man's Freewill; and accordingly every one of us may find we possess it, inasmuch as we have free power all of us to think about God, or not to think about him; we can confine our Thoughts to this World, or we can raise them to another; we can meditate upon what is good, or we can
meditate

meditate upon what is evil, upon what is temporal and what is eternal. But this is not all; we have power also over our Affections by Virtue of this infinite Grace and Power which our God continually giveth us; thus we can not only *think* upon God, but if we were so disposed, we can *choose* God; we can make God a *Delight* to us; we can *love* him with all our Heart and Soul and Strength; we can *love* also the Things of his Law and Kingdom; we can make these Things dearer and more precious to us than all the Things of this World and the Flesh; thus we can set God above all Things in our Hearts, and thereby, if we would, we can put all Things below God; we can make ourselves humble and vile; we can make the Things of this World and the Flesh submit to the Things of another World and the Spirit; thus we can advance in spiritual Purification, which consists, we shewed, in separating between what is of God and what is not of God, that so the Law of the Love of God may have full Dominion, and restore all Things to Order, Harmony and Peace in us.

Behold here then the one true and only Reason why the *unconverted* and *impenitent* remain in such

such their *unpurified* State ! They do not with their Freewill, and by Virtue of the Power of God therein, *choose* God as their greatest and only true Good ; they suffer their Affections to lie buried in the Things of Time and Sense, in mere Vanities and temporal Delights of this World and the Flesh, when they might raise and exalt them upwards, to apprehend, and love, and delight in, and possess the Things of Eternity, the never ceasing Blessedness, the genuine unspeakable Peace and Delights flowing from the unutterable Mercy and Love of the great Father of Being. The Fault therefore lieth solely with themselves ; God is the same infinite Good, ever present, ever pressing to be received by them, but they will not stir up their Desires to taste and apprehend his goodness ; to see how much better he is than all other Things to them ; and this is the reason why they live in Sin and Impurity.

But it is not only the *impenitent* and *unconverted*, who thus do themselves Injury, and suffer Mischief by retarding their Purification. The *Penitent* and the *Converted* also, in many Cases, are unfaithful in this Respect, and through
Negligence

Negligence in stirring up and rightly exercising the Grace and Power of God implanted in their Free-will, they frequently fall short of that Purification to which they might have attained.

Let me here, Beloved, entreat the particular Attention of all such amongst you, as have ever experienced in yourselves any Work of Repentance and Conversion to God and his Kingdom.

Purification, we have already shewn, is a gradual progressive Work; it is not effected under first Conversion, or by the first Acts of Repentance towards God; but it is effected by successive Processes of an obedient Life, in which there is a continual putting off of Evil, or what is of the old corrupt Man, and a continual putting on of Good, which is a continual Growth and Formation in the Principles of that new and spiritual Life of Love and Charity, of Order, Harmony, and Peace; of Justice, Judgment, and Uprightness; of Temperance, Soberness, and well doing, that is from Jesus Christ.

Too many, it is to be feared, have suffered Mischief in their spiritual State, from wrong and false Notions on this Subject. Thus some have supposed themselves made perfectly clean and pure in God's Sight, under their first Con-

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version

version and first Acts of Repentance; hence they have fallen into Carelessness, Sloth, and Inattention in Regard to further Progress: The Consequence has often been, that the Desire of the Will has been captivated again by those Evils which seemed to have been forsaken and dead, but from which the Soul was never radically purged; the Love of God, which had been chosen as the greatest Good, hereby becomes languid; the Things of this World and the Flesh get fresh Power and Ascendency; and thus the great Work of Purification is oft-times retarded, if not totally checked.

And what Reason now shall we assign for this unhappy Declination from the good Way and Work which had been begun? There can be no just Cause assigned but that above mentioned, viz. *a Negligence in stirring up and rightly exercising the Grace and Power of God implanted in the Free-will*; for as the unconverted and impenitent, through this Negligence, never attain to any Knowledge and Love of God, even so through a like Negligence, the converted and penitent often fall short of that Measure of Divine Knowledge and Love, to which they might have attained.

Few

Few amongst us alas! are free from fault in this Respect; few are careful and watchful on all Occasions to *cherish* the Grace and Love of God; to keep the heavenly Flame ever burning bright; to have *our Loins girded and our Lamps burning*; to maintain in the Soul a constant Elevation above the lesser Things of Time and Sense; to observe all the Approaches and Encroachments of Evil; to renounce and make them abominable when observed; at the same time to prepare for the better receiving the Approaches and Influences of God and his Goodness; to let these Influences have their full and perfect Formation in the Life, by a dutiful Submission to their Guidance and Government in all the relative Duties of our several Stations; thus to grow daily more and more in a Divine Image and Likeness; and to advance daily to greater Degrees of Purity, Power, and Peace in the heavenly Life and Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

And yet, Beloved, we must all of us be forced to confess that we have *Power* to do all this, even a Divine Power, Omnipotence itself, if we would but look for and exert it. We must all be forced to confess, that we might

become daily more and more pure; we might attain daily a nearer Place to the Throne of Jesus Christ; we might experience daily a further Separation from the Powers of Sin and Darkness; we might be renewed daily in a more glorious and perfect Image of the Divine Love, Order, Harmony, and Beauty, and bring forth purer and more plentiful Fruits thereof in the Works of our Callings here below; we might in short be daily fitted for higher Degrees of Bliss in the everlasting Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

Oh then, let us take these Things into serious Consideration, as Things of the most awful Importance to us; let us search out, let us consider well, let us use aright the great Power of God in our Freewill; let us ponder well on this his inestimable Gift, this heavenly Talent committed to us, that so we may know and discern it's high Value, and that it's Price is above Worlds; let us take heed of hiding it in a *Napkin*, or in the Earth, like the unprofitable Servant in the Gospel, when we ought to be trading with it, when we should be making it fruitful to us in the *Bank* or *Treasure-House* of the divine Riches.

And

And are there any here present, of that unhappy Number above described, who have never used this Talent of God in the Way of Repentance and Conversion? but who are still abusing it in the Ways of Sin and Folly? Oh, be advised in Time; convert yourselves unto your God; obey the pressing Calls of his Mercy in your Freewill; make a Surrender of yourselves to him; join your Wills with his Will in sincere Prayer for Amendment of Life, for Departure from Evil, for Purification and Renovation in the Spirit of your God; feel thus after the unspeakable Blessing of the Divine Love in your Hearts, and never rest till you are made sensible that it is the greatest possible Blessing you can ever find; and then doubt not, but it will sooner or later be made manifest to you.

And for you, Beloved, who in the Ways of Repentance and Conversion, have already tasted of this supreme Blessedness, let me counsel you also to stir up further the Grace and Power of God that is in you, in Order that you may taste it the more fully. Take Heed how you suffer the Work of Purification to be retarded by fancying it to be already compleated: Having
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been made sensible of the Vanity of all Things compared with the Riches of the Divine Mercy, suffer not your Minds to be taken captive again by that Vanity: Rather labour for further Purification and Separation from all Unclean-ness of the old Man, and for a further more intimate Admission into the Kingdom of the eternal Purity and Peace: For this Purpose stir up your Wills to feel after and apprehend more and more of the Divine Mercy, by frequent Prayer, by serious Meditation, by Reading often the Word of God, but especially by sincere Examination of the Ends, Purposes and Thoughts of your Hearts, and Actions of your Lives, touching the Love of God and of your Neighbour. These Things if ye will observe and do, ye will be preserved from the great Danger and Mischief of retarding your Purification, and becoming daily more and more clean from all Sin and Defilement of Iniquity, through deep Humiliation and Submission of yourselves before God, attended with the full and free Exertion of all Powers and Principles both of Soul and Body at the same Time, ye will daily see and enjoy more and more of his blessed Presence, and Kingdom, and Power,
and

and Glory, in your Hearts and Lives, being daily rendered purer Forms for the Reception thereof.

And O merciful Jesus, who art *the Fountain opened for Sin and Uncleanness*,* give us thy sinful People, we beseech thee, right Apprehensions of the Necessity, Nature, and Manner of that spiritual Purification, which thou camest to call us to, and to accomplish in us. For this Purpose, convince us of our natural Impurities and Defilements through Sin; and may this Conviction lead us to seek earnestly to Thee and to thy Word, as the only Source of Purity! Convince us further, that we have all of us *free* Power to go to Thee and to thy Word, and to purify Ourselves thereby, and that this Power is thy continual Gift to us in our Free-will; and may this Conviction lead us to acknowledge the inestimable Value of this thy Gift, and so to use it, that it may become fruitful and multiply in us, being neither rejected by our Obstinacy, nor rendered barren by our Indolence, nor defiled by our Iniquities, nor perverted by the forward Exertions of our own Spirits! Teach us thus, O merciful Lord, the
high

high and heavenly Wisdom of co-operating aright with thee in the great Work of our Purification, by submitting all our own Exertions and Operations to thine, and exercising them in Conformity to the eternal Laws of Truth and Order which Thou hast appointed; that we may put our whole Trust in Thee, yet not so as to become careless and presumptive; that we may be active to cleanse ourselves, but not in Self-activity; that we may purify ourselves, yet acknowledge all our Purity to be continually from Thee; that we may operate in Freedom as of Ourselves, yet in the deepest Humility confessing and exalting in all Things thine holy Operation. So may we hope finally to become clean from Sin, whilst we thus earnestly take Part with Thee against our own Evils; and as we become clean from Sin, we know that we shall be renewed and regenerated, through thy Mercy, in Righteousness, which is the Spirit of pure Love and Charity, the essential Life of Heaven, the Source of unutterable Peace, the Perfection of Purity, in which and by which we shall have Admission into thy Presence, and be made One with Thee, and rejoice in thy Kingdom, and praise thy holy Name for ever and ever. AMEN.



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